Canadian Lyrics and Other Poems

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By
Hyman Edelstein

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CANADIAN LYRICS

AND OTHER POEMS

By

HYMAN EDELSTEIN

Author's Edition

WILLIAM BRIGGS
TORONTO
1916

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NOTE

The Canadian pieces printed in this volume are here offered to the public for the first time. Most of the other poems have been published in different periodicals, and appear now in a revised form.

H. E.

MONTREAL, January, 1916.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Prœmium	9
Canada	11
Winter Morning	12
Winter in Canada	13
Contrast	15
A Picture of My Love	16
When I Left Ireland	18
The Change	19
After Death	20
Canada to England	21
From the Depths	22
Immortality Has No Resurrection	23
Approach of Summer	24
Where?	26
For England	28
"England's Fight Is Glory"	31
Conscript or Volunteer	33
Ideals and Life	36
Science and Faith	37
The Hidden Gleams	39

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Sea	40
Farewell	41
Her Answer	42
Twilight on Summer Seas	43
Love, Charity, Goodness	45
"Let My People Go"	46
The Christian's Lament	48
The Vision Fulfilled	52
After the "Pogrom"	54
The Drifting Boat	56
Moses	58
"We're Very Near to God"	60
Passover	61
Christmas Bells; or, The Wandering Jew	62

Canadian Lyrics and Other Poems

PRŒMIUM

WHERE th' ages strew their minstrel store,
And long-famed bards o'ersway the lyre,
Well may the world protest, "No more!
'Tis surfeit of celestial fire!"

But though my voice ring strange 'mid theirs,
It yet shall swell those hallowed strains:
My song murmurs remoter airs,
And mingles ancienter refrains.

My words may tell how I absorbed
The music of another race:
My thoughts, like days and nights bright-orbed,
Shall radiate through time and space.

PRŒMIUM

Day takes from sun no lasting glow,
  Nor night from stars undying grace:
More distant suns the glory throw,
  And give them an immortal face.

So may this offering of a scribe,
  Sounding a language not his sires',
Prove that his own eternal tribe
  Still bears the old prophetic fires!

CANADA

O TROPIC-ARCTIC home, my own,
Whose charms I fondly cherish,
Though but three years this love I've known,
Such love will never perish.

I left a fair and gleaming isle
Where yet dropped tears too many,
But now beneath your constant smile
It seems I knew not any.

If with such grace—as, sure, I know—
You welcome each newcomer:
'Mid all your snows, our love must glow
In everlasting summer!

WINTER MORNING

THE ice-breath's thick on the window-panes:
The double-windows gloom o'ercast
With cracking layers of murky stains
Breathed on by winter's morning blast.
Without, the bread and milk-sleighs glide,
Tossing the roads of furrowed snow,
While from the roofs the snow-crusts slide,
Smashing themselves in spray below;
And baker's horse with hoary bit
And frosted belly his errand goes,
And on the snow-piled doorsteps sit
Bottles of lumpèd milk fresh-froze.
A rose, child's face the morning hath,
When lurid tuques of blue and red
Scarce peep above the snow-walled path
Where rubbered feet do schoolward tread.—
That's the spirit the morning hath
With children's cheek of ruddy hue,
Washed shining in the snowflake bath,
And blowing clouds of living dew.

WINTER IN CANADA

CANADIAN streams trip sprightly
In the golden fires of June—
But Canadian snows shine brightly
In the silver winter moon:

Then hail, the Canadian winter-time,
With the sleigh-drive, skate, and snowshoe climb!

Mount Royal's slopes are snow-paved ways,
And there we'll go a-sliding,
While past us tinkle flying sleighs,
And knived skates are gliding:

Then raise the echoing slogan—
To ski, skate and toboggan!

Mount Royal's sides are white and steep—
What recks the snowshoed hero?
The moon is clear, the snow is deep,
And twenty under zero:

This be our ringing tocsin,
To snowshoe, mitt and mocc'sin!

WINTER IN CANADA

And O, how the blood with new youth thrills
In these Canadian winters,
As the ski skims high and the sledge slips by,
And the skate cuts icy splinters:

How the heart skis too—'mid delirious shrieks
Of the springing young Canadians,
In the winter sun on the snowy peaks,
Or the moon's majestic radiance:

O, the wild Canadian winter-time!
That's for the blood the sprinter-time!

CONTRAST

O, THE soul of the night of the Arctic,
With your sea of memorial lights—
There's a spirit that throws stranger gleam on these snows
Than the moon from her glittering heights.

Not from ice rivers flowing with starlight,
Floats this dream of a long-vanished day:
There's another, a sacred, a far light
From behind all this starry array;

And it fills all this glimmering whiteness
With the hallowing rays that illume
The belov'd we have lost—the pure brightness
Of a spirit that shines from the tomb;

And there's something that's haunting and tragic
In this slumber and ancient repose,
And the phantom-like lights and the magic
Of the moon on Canadian snows.

A PICTURE OF MY LOVE

(Taken in a snowshoe tramp on Mount Royal Montreal.)

See, there she stands, in snowshoe strapped,
Her vigorous, luscious form
In the familiar sweater wrapped
That hugs her, snug and warm,
And dazzling o'er that Mount, snow-capped
Like sunburst after storm!

Her laughing eyes defy the sun,
Her teeth bemock the snow;
And, red and moistly-fresh, upon
Her cheek I spy the glow
Of kisses left by snowflakes spun
'Mong winds that chilly blow.

A PICTURE OF MY LOVE

There in the gloomy, still background
  The naked trees repose,
Weaving a dreamy shadow round—
  While she such radiance throws,
As glad from those dark wilds to bound—
  A Naiad of the snows!

And well this wood and snowy sea,
  Should frame her pictured laughter,
Sure, 'twas some smiling god to me
  From mystic haunts did waft her—
Vision of light, love, purity,
  And heaven forever after!

WHEN I LEFT IRELAND

Heart-sick, ill in body, too,
So I left you, Erin,
Wond'ring on the raptures you
Bore for me to share in,
Wond'ring on my griefs of which
You were so unsparin',
Wond'ring on the unknown beach
Whither I was farin'.

O, that end of dreams, that knell
Of a vain endeavor!
Yet what lover bade farewell
Erin—thee—forever?
How those partings bind the soul
That our bodies sever!
So though oceans 'twixt us roll
We are parted never.

THE CHANGE

In that tiny island
That oft seemed my cell,
'Mid woods deep and silent
How I longed to dwell!

Now, Erin, I'm wishin'
For your darling beams:
It's *you*'re now the vision,
Of *you* are my dreams!

AFTER DEATH

THERE never grew
A flower like you,
So exquisitely fair,
That such sweet scent
And beauty lent
Unto the summer air.

* * * * * *

O, ne'er were strewn
Like you, so soon,
Dead petals torn and sere,
Yet O, how bright
In my black night
And 'mid my winter here!

CANADA TO ENGLAND

O'ER the dividing, joining seas,
I breathe with every ocean-breeze
    My love for thee!
Each wave that knocks against thy shore
My filial troth vows evermore
    To thee, the free!

Now in thy hour of grief and strife,
My blood to thee who gav'st me life
    I give, my mother!
What mother like thee can I know?
O never, never fall that blow—
    To own another!

FROM THE DEPTHS

Sitting under a maple-tree,
The sunny green light round me shed
From leaves translucent like a sea
Surging and sobbing overhead:
It seems I lie 'neath oceans buried,
And only hear life's long, deep sighs,
And I could wish some boat had ferried
My weary flesh into the skies!

IMMORTALITY HAS NO RESURRECTION

DEATH taketh all—the flesh is only flesh—
There is no life but what is from the flesh:
The soul is but a poet's thought, and never,
Never and never shall we meet again!

* * * * * * *

You think, like seasons, doth our life run out:
The Spring our youth; the Summer our full bloom;
The Autumn our decline; the Winter, sinking
Into black death—and after? Spring again? . . .

The spirit hath an eternal summer, here
And in th' hereafter; for if man hath soul,
Rising amid his physical decay,
How shall it wither in that fadeless day
Where matter is not, nor a resurrection;
Where are no suns to shape its life to seasons,
But ultimate, unchanging light of God?

APPROACH OF SUMMER

A MORNING of late Spring, when perfumes well
With every breath of Nature, and the soul
Of Beauty, Freedom, Love reanimate,
Leaps from its chains, as a long-frozen sea,
Relaxing all its stiffened, flat-laid limbs
Flings off its ice-bands, and with merry tumult
Races along in a new spirit of youth;
And once again the universe is sounding
With tune of birds in blue, mysterious spaces,
And song of breezes breathing on the trees
Their resurrecting balsam o'er the bud.
And lo! the sun is warming up the city,
And the white, shining streets are specked with
groups
Of playing children, while the hiding birds,
Peeping from secret vantage, humorously
Keep winking at those small contemporaries
Like jovial spectators at a circus,
Approving now with whistle, now applauding
With chorus of rapturous trills . . .

APPROACH OF SUMMER

Till suddenly
A shower of teeming rain sweeps in the players,
Some under dripping trees, some on the door-
steps,
And the road rushes with the roaring tide.
But soon again the sun dives from the blue
Splashing in gold the town and fields; and th' air
Reeks with the spices of Canadian forests . . .

This is the rain that weeps Spring into Summer,
Leaving such perfume and such light around,
As tears—those sudden, fast, remembering
tears—
Which, scalding though they be, shower round
the fragrance
And the wild, glorious blaze of our lost Spring!

WHERE?

THE brilliant heaven and sea
Abound in minstrelsy;
The lovely earth is full
Of garlands sweet to cull:
Now tell me, what is there or here that *I* love?

The sunset, dawn are fraught
With charms by poets sought;
The world's a marvellous sight
Of glories infinite—
Can you then tell me where, O where is *my* love?

It's not in earth or air,
It is not anywhere
On hills or daisied plain
Or o'er the magic main,
Nor thither will I vainly long to fly, love:

WHERE?

O, here in your near face
All those delights I trace—
All beauties there I find,
Flower, sun and song combined—
I know, I know, I know that there is *my* love!

FOR ENGLAND

(*In reply to the German "Song of Hate."*)

O, LET me sing a "song of love"
That sea and land and heav'n above
  May echo back my praise
Of England and her freedom, mild
  As summer's breeze that plays
Over the seas that long have smiled
  Since old, victorious days;
And smiling still, lie fair and free
In England's sunny liberty.

Shall foemen sing the "song of hate,"
Invoking Hell to blast thy fate,
  And shall the German rave,
Such cursed slanders 'gainst thee speak—
  My England, free and brave!—
"A foul oppressor of the weak,
  And tyrant of the wave!"
Calling thy ancient liberty
A dire and shameful tyranny!

FOR ENGLAND

How shall my quivering lips be dumb,
And from my heart no answer come
To quell the foeman's cries,
That brand thee "robber-nation" "false,"
And "master-mind of lies?"—
Is this thou whom their Schiller calls
Grand Freedom's Paradise?
O England, thou that mad'st me free,
How shall I plead and pray for thee?

O England, mother England!
Confusion shall be theirs
Who seek to shame thee to the world
When German might despairs:
Their taunts and slanders at thee hurled
Shall track them unawares.

O England, mother England!
That lov'st to shield and save—
Were't not for thy benignant laws,
I still had been a slave!—
For that have I not worthy cause
To call thee free and brave?

FOR ENGLAND

In the strong grip of liberty
  Thou holdest fast the main—
And if thy rule is tyranny,
  When did thy slaves complain?
What recompense is ours to be
  Linked in thy freedom's chain!

O England, mother England!
  Long may'st thou "tyrant" be!—
Thy "slaves" shall never, never swerve
  In love and loyalty—
If men are proud to love and serve
  A tyrant such as thee!

"ENGLAND'S FIGHT IS GLORY"

Hoist high the martial banner, boys!—let swell
the battle's thunder-strain,
We're out to fight old England's fight on swelter-
ing field and breezy main;
The floating forts of England will keep sentry
round our darling isle,
While we shall tramp the battlefield for many a
long and gruesome mile;
Those fields with flood of our father's blood in
righteous cause are gory, boys—
Then stand together!—at this hour we're neither
Whig nor Tory, boys!—
Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! it's war—and Eng-
land's fight is glory, boys!

O, brother Dick will come back home in fresh-
won stripes and colors dressed,
And papa will be with him, too, with gorgeous
medals on his breast;

"ENGLAND'S FIGHT IS GLORY"

And little sis brave Dick will kiss, and papa strong will lift her high,
And he will point where England's flag flies boldly in the windy sky:
"The Union Jack is still our flag, and England's still our home, my child;
Our lovely land of freedom grand is still by foemen undefiled:
So pray, dear wife, our child by God be cherished for such motherhood
In England's great, free Empire—Heaven's temple of men's brotherhood.
So shall the Union Jack be ours, and ours it ever shall remain,
The emblem of true liberty which nothing but our blood may stain!"

So will they tell the grand old tale—old England's splendid story, boys,
Of fields with flood of our heroes' blood in righteous cause all gory, boys:
Then stand together!—at this hour we're neither Whig nor Tory, boys!—
Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! it's war—and England's fight is glory, boys!

CONSCRIPT OR VOLUNTEER

Let other nations vaunt their might,
With martial tyranny affright
The Sons of Freedom and of Peace;
But England never shall rejoice
To lift the sword and make to cease
The principle of man's free choice!

Let armies gather everywhere—
Our own free spirit shall be there
To drive the foe into the sea
And vindicate our liberty:—
Not driven, a trembling, conscript slave;
But free as he was born, and brave,
Each man shall rise and arm and stand
To guard the borders of our land:
For Englishmen must ever be
The volunteers of Liberty!

CONSCRIPT OR VOLUNTEER

O Britain! show thyself the one—
Constant as thy unsetting sun—
To scorn to use the word "compel,"
Though round thy shores burst every hell!
Let our free spirit now prevail!
Defend the Empire!— if we fail,
And heed not our own Mother's call,
Truth fails, and Justice, Freedom,—all!

Ye sons of England, there your flag
Beckons to you, and will ye lag?
Wait for the shameful, base decree—
By force to shield your liberty!
Shall it be said that Englishmen
At duty's call, could falter then?
O never name "a conscript slave"
The son of England, free and brave!

But come in armies numberless;
Each act his part, and God will bless!
Come of your own free will and show
To all the world that Britons know
Their duty to their destiny
As God's own Guard of Liberty!

CONSCRIPT OR VOLUNTEER

O let no English lip command
"Britons by force shall serve their land!"
That were worse slavery by far
And worse damnation than all war!
Be true, be true, O England!—then
Shall Heav'n requite, though all earth raves
Let Englishmen be Englishmen
And Britons never shall be slaves!

THE ANSWER

O never England—Freedom—fall!
God!—I answer to the call,
Answer—I give my life, my all!

IDEALS AND LIFE

I MADE me, long ago, a golden harp,
And every string I tuned to harmonies
Of a celestial song: and I, the player,
Slept in the wonder of the music's charm,
And Life seemed very far—no world of mine:—

Yet oft were borne to me discordant sounds
From the harsh world of Life; and, later, when
The graphic murmurs of realities
Surged in a ruthless, overwhelming tide,
I woke—the strings were snapped—the harp lay
broken,
And now I stoop, fit back the golden frame,
And gather and tie the strings to the keys of LIFE.

SCIENCE AND FAITH

I saw afar the dim, cerulean sea
Embrace the sapphire sky,
And from their union fly
Myriads of dazzling gems, pouring to me.—

And round me seemed to fall th' effulgent shower,
And spread the earth with light,
And all the marvellous sight
Enthralled me by its wonder and its power.

Lo! everywhere new brightness sparkling lay:
The fields, the vales, the hills,
The glades, the lakes and rills
Gleamed in the splendour of th' ethereal day;

SCIENCE AND FAITH

And from the eyes and flesh of man there shone
A radiance all divine
For Love did intertwine
The Universe, and men knew God was One!

Afar the sea of Truth doth smile and nod
Kissed by the heav'n of Faith,
Whence infinite void and Death
Are lit with flaming messages of God!

THE HIDDEN GLEAMS

A SPRING THOUGHT

Why should a poet sing
Of nature's bourgeoning,
Of fields that flaunt their summer-gay attire,
Of trees new-clad
And hearts all glad
At skies atune with nature's living lyre;
The concert of these sparkling hills,
Their drumming falls and stringed rills:—
They're all from God,
The assuring nod,
Repeated promises, the prophecy,
And murmurings of immortality.

Such is a poet's ear
Diviner things to hear—
And such, a poet's eye
The hidden gleams to spy,
The nobler shades and hues, the distant melody,
Which are the touches of God's perfect artistry.

THE SEA

I GREET thee, my beloved sea, once more!
Once more I hear thy ancient murmuring,
And mark thy smile on every liquid wing
That wafts thy progress to and from the shore,
Beckoning me to follow and explore
The mystic language of thy lips, which bring
Old, sacred whispers—songs the sea-shells sing
Pressed at the ear—lost voices we adore!
O, my beloved sea! and canst thou yet,
After these lonely years of hope all fled,
Have power to conjure scenes I'd fain forget
And bury, with the lovely that lies dead?
Where dost thou offer rest, thou restless sea?
Far o'er thy bosom, or deep, deep under thee?

FAREWELL

Call it a sunset or a dream—
  Thou'lt loveliest seem:
Thy cheeks shadowing in the ebbing lights,
The droop and waning in thine eyes,
  As in the skies,
The stars close at the end of summer nights!

Call it a sunset—so thy hair,
  Flaxen hair,
Throws round thy paling brow its crowning ray;
Call it a vision—so we sleep,
  So we weep
That each from each should vanish far away!

HER ANSWER

You ask me whom I'd marry:
  Dear friend, I love too well
With love too vast and starry
  In weary flesh to dwell—
But give me the poet's vision,
And music's breath elysian—
His harmonies should slay me
By whose grave in the dust I would lay me!

So, in a sunset valley,
  When the dying flames of day
Vanish majestically
  Over the hills away,—
My soul, my soul it is yearning
No more to this earth-mist returning—
To be there with the sun in his setting,
And to sink with him unregretting!

TWILIGHT ON SUMMER SEAS

Lo! upon the ocean sheeting
Twilight's pensive hues are fleeting—
Curtains of the parting day,
Fleecy folds of blue and gray:
Dim the coast-line, ocean-kissed;
Phantom foam and flaky mist:
Dumb, unnumbered murmurings,
Ocean's mystic whisperings:
Ebb-lulled lapping of still seas
Rocked in twilight's slumbrous breeze:
Like hushed breath of infant sleeping
In the mother's song-swayed keeping:—
And sea's golden smiles grow wan,
As the summer night sails on.
O, sweet hour of solemn thought!
O, sweet hour, by tired brain sought!
Hour of tender retrospect,
Hour that bids us to reflect—
With the passing of the day,
Thus all fairness flees away:

TWILIGHT ON SUMMER SEAS

When like star-beams, angel bright,
Myriad memories round me light
With the faces of sweet friends,
And of love that swift Death ends:—
And the sea each image laves
Cradled 'mid the hollowing waves.
Oh! I thank thee, twilight calm,
For this deep, mysterious balm,
That dost give such dreams and sighs
For old daylights and old skies!

LOVE, CHARITY, GOODNESS

The warrior's deeds have short renown;
Love blossoms with eternal roots,
And Charity hath deathless fruits,
And Goodness wears a priceless crown.

And Love has lasting recompense,
The memory through endless age,
The record of a golden page
In spiritual permanence.

"LET MY PEOPLE GO"

(*See Exodus* 8: 20.)

WHEN, 'mid the noise of cymbals clashing wild and free,
And chant of Israel's daughters dancing by the sea,
Freedom was throned majestic in God's victory—
Then from before His Power did trembling tyrants flee.

* * * * * * *

Age upon age has echoed with that mighty song—
The battle against Force—the triumph over Wrong:—
Still we see tyrants raging, still cower the slavish throng,
Still we hear Israel groaning—"How long, O God, how long?"

"LET MY PEOPLE GO"

Burst into flames, ye heavens! and let your brimstone flow:
Like Sodom and Gomorrah, let be the overthrow
Of throned murderers that say, "Your God we do not know!"

But see! the White Czar shudders—a surging murmur—lo!
'Tis a human cry of nations: "Woe to all tyrants, woe!" . . .
So swells the voice of Freedom, commanding, "Let them go!"
And the heavens reverberating, re-echo: "Let them go!"
And the fiery tongue of Justice thunders: "Let them go!—
"Hurl down the gates of Bondage, and let my people go!"

THE CHRISTIAN'S LAMENT

[Written after a perusal of a History of the Jews, wherein its Christian author in most bitter and passionate language laments the unparalleled suffering inflicted by professing Christians on the Jewish people.]

Sometimes in blindness I may curse
The oppressor's bloody soul,
But at such bitter, wild remorse
E'en fury seeks control.
I may have vowed eternal hate,
Have mocked the Gentile's creed—
The love that cursed a nation's fate
Were not less foul in deed.

Two thousand years—two thousand years!
Sword, stake, and rack, and cell;
Steel, fire, and torture, blood and tears;
Age, childhood, steeped in hell!

THE CHRISTIAN'S LAMENT

Egyptian lash, Assyrian chain,
  Barbarian tyrants' rod;
The Grecian's curse, Rome's martial train—
  Still lives the Son of God!

The pen his sword, the Book his shield,
  He bore the age-long yoke,
And on the bloody battlefield
  The foeman felt his stroke.
Th' Egyptian cowed at Moses' staff,
  The Greek 'fore Judas flew,
The Roman scattered as the chaff
  Swept by the conquering Jew.

Yet, God in Heaven! how many know
  What battles Israel fought?
What wondrous works with pen and bow
  The Hebrew hero wrought?
Ye lights of Israel! shed your beam
  On Israel's starless night,
And bathe in glory's beauteous gleam
  His wars for God and right!

Judas—he hurled the tyrant king
  From his inglorious throne—

THE CHRISTIAN'S LAMENT

Of myriads like thee though I sing,
'Tis but to me alone!
Bar Cochba, who on Bither's height
Didst valorous deeds to free
Thy people from Rome's galling might,
Who cares for songs of thee?

The Roman lord built temples grand
In memory of the brave—
No shrines for that heroic band
That fills an unknown grave.
The rocks in vaunting measures tell
Of Greece's faithful sons—
No pillar for the Jews who fell
In countless Marathons!

Oh, shame! who in fanatic glee
Revere the Grecian fane,
The Roman arch of victory,
And Israel's deeds disdain.
Yet there shall shine the gladsome day
When things that buried lie,
Like precious stones with peerless ray
Alone shall charm the eye.

THE CHRISTIAN'S LAMENT

Then for the Samson of mankind
In every Christian land,
Where beat such hearts as here I find
Shall tow'ring columns stand,
And Roman might, and Grecian fame,
Spurned by men's mocking laugh,
Shall shrink into an empty name,
A warning epitaph!

Then sing, my race, thy day is come,
When truth must right restore!—
The nations know thy martyrdom,
And thou shalt weep no more!
No more thou'lt think 'twere vanity
In Christian work to see
The love thou'st taught—Christianity
In inhumanity!

THE VISION FULFILLED

Daniel Deronda.—"The idea that I am possessed with is that of restoring a political existence to my people, making them a nation again; giving them a national centre, such as the English have, though they too are scattered over the face of the globe. That is a task which presents itself to me as a duty. I am resolved to begin it, however feebly. I am resolved to devote my life to it. At the least, I may awaken a movement in other minds, such as has been awakened in my own."

Mordecai.—"Let us help to will our own better future and the better future of the world—not renounce our higher gift and say, 'Let us be as if we were not among the populations'; but choose our full heritage, claim the brotherhood of our nation, and carry into it a new brotherhood with the nations of the Gentiles. The vision is there; it will be fulfilled."

"Daniel Deronda" (George Eliot).

THE VISION FULFILLED

WHAT if the day at last should calm up-blaze
After this moaning night, bloody and black;
When from this war begotten, leap the rays
Of everlasting Peace, Love without lack;
What if poor Israel in his home of old
Again be throned, and new Jerusalem
Reflect the Messianic Temple's gold,
The Sh'chinah of the chosen seed of Shem!
The Prophets spake: th' Eternal God hath wrought
By all His thunders, their grand prophecy:
"Ye are my witnesses; you have I bought
For My great Name, and you shall never die!"
Though now in murder-lust, in greed and fraud,
The nations reel, yet every strife shall cease,
And in the blessed victory of God,
Vengeance shall die, and men shall walk in Peace!—
Here are the Night and Terror;—there the dawn.
Where Love sits mourning on Hate's ruins, gleams
From our beloved East; and Israel, drawn
To Zion's breast, can dream, thank God! and dreams!

AFTER THE "POGROM"

(On seeing the picture of a Jewess sitting by the dissevered head of her brother.)

She sits beside a human skull
That was her brother's head,
She picked it from a village-full
Of battered Jews, all dead;

She sits alone; nor light nor tear
Her fixed eye betrays,
Until her own and his appear
To join their ghastly gaze.

The snow outside is red and white,
But only white her cheek:
Her people's blood had flowed all night,
And hers is chill and bleak.

AFTER THE "POGROM"

Her tresses, black, unkempt and dull,
  Around her bare arms fold
That now embrace the hideous skull,
  And now her head uphold.

Then suddenly she thinks it wakes,
  The eyes roll gruesomely,
The mouth distends and from it breaks
  Demoniacal glee.

Closer she bends, and now she tries
  A competition grim:
She moves her lips, she rolls her eyes,
  And smiles, and shrieks—like *him!*—

So all that day, in that dark room,
  Rang laughter, weird and shrill:
The silent houses shrink in gloom;
  The corpse lies still, so still!

THE DRIFTING BOAT

A LITTLE boat was drifting
  Alone upon the sea—
The big, big waves were lifting
  And swinging threateningly;
The angry clouds were shifting
  Above it fast and free.

The billows leaped and tumbled,
  The lightning madly clave,
The thunder cracked and rumbled,
  And fierce the rain-storm drave,
And the boat-sides fairly crumbled
  Beneath the crashing wave.

But harmless flew the lightning,
  Vain fell the thunder-shock,
Powerless the gale, nor frightening
  The treacherous, sunken rock:—
For the waves, instead, were tightening
  The boat-sides with each knock.

And the lightning only lighted
The unknown seas before,
And the wind held up and righted
The boat, when waves swept o'er . . .

* * * * * *

—Till the "Promised Land" is sighted,
And Israel's home once more!

MOSES

In a little bark—
A pitch-smeared ark—
  The Hebrew mother laid him,
Amid the sedge
By the river's edge
  Where papyri-leaves could shade him.

Ne'er was launched a ship
On more wondrous trip
  With such Pilot true to guide it,
For that fragile, dark
Rude-fashioned ark
  Bore the mightiest mind inside it!

What grander feats
Have they done—the fleets
  And sea-lords of the nations?
Was there one, withal,
Like this Admiral
  Of all times and generations?

MOSES

O, Pilot-Sage,
Through endless age
  Thine Ark with us safe reposes,
While with eye and ear
Like thy sister's, near
  We shall heed thee, our Teacher, Moses!

"WE'RE VERY NEAR TO GOD"

"Oh, mother, tell me why it is
That Christian priests so bless us,
And with their soft caresses,
Say we are very dear to God,
And we are very near to God,
And we are always His."

The Hebrew mother raised the lad,
And dew'd his cheek with kisses—
Such love the Hebrew's bliss is—
An angel's halo lit the floor,
The Russian savage burst the door:
"Thus by the bloody rod, my child,
We're very near to God, my child,
We're very near to God."

PASSOVER

Once more resound the tents of Israel
With chant of jubilation and of praise,
Telling the martyrdom of ancient days,
And how God heard His anguished people's wail,
And saved with great redemption: then grew pale
The chiefs of Edom, and in dread amaze
The mighty lords of Moab, faint, did gaze
On Egypt's doom, and 'fore God's wrath did quail.
Vanished is Egypt now; th' Assyrian chain
No more affrights, nor Roman tyranny—
Yet other foes and other Pharaohs reign,
And 'neath the lash of Christianity
Israel still writhes, heir to eternal scars,—
Bondsman of Christian love and Russian Tsars!

CHRISTMAS BELLS; OR, THE WANDERING JEW

" PEACE on earth, good-will 'twixt men."
  Far the midnight air's resounding,
  And the words are gaily bounding
Over sea, land, wood and glen.
Through the dark a darker form
  Wends his way outcast and lonely—
  'Tis the wandering Hebrew only,
And his beard waves in the storm;
And the storm wafts forth the peal,
  And the words dance round the spectre,
  Moist his lips with their sweet nectar;
But they only make him reel.
On his staff he leans, and hears.
  " 'Tis the song I'm always singing,"—
  And the bells are gaily ringing,
And he sighs and disappears. . . .

CHRISTMAS BELLS

Peace is his 'neath blood-stained cowl,
  Good-will reigns among the devils—
  For the Jew no Christmas revels
But the revels of the ghoul.
"Peace in Heav'n 'neath earth for me!"—
  And the bells are made of iron,
  Singing like the guileful Siren,
And they peal in irony.

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Edelstein, Hyman
Canadian lyrics

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